

## **JGHS SCHOOL COUNCIL – Annual Report for AGM October 2009**

### **Officers**

The Officers as agreed at the last AGM (Dec 2008) are:

Chair: Nigel Goddard

Vice Chairs: Alpana Mair and Sheena Purdom

Communications Officer: Ann Henderson

Treasurer: Tom Macintyre

Auditor: Robert Inder

JGHS Trust representatives: Barbara MacPherson and Sue Clarke.

In addition, several parents volunteered to assist with School Council Communications work. Parents and carers from across the year groups have participated in our regular School Council meetings, and in the activities organised through the Events Group.

### **Report**

Since our last AGM, in December 2008, topics considered at School Council meetings have included: Student Eco Group; Additional Support for Learning; P7/S1 Transition; Edinburgh City Council Budgets and funding for schools 'JGHS buildings – now and in the future'. In addition a meeting about school dress code attracted a large turnout.

A successful special 'South Africa – Global Citizenship' evening was organised to allow parents to hear more from the students about their February trip to South Africa, and to learn more about the purpose of the link with Zwelibanze and Umlazi.

City councillors were lobbied during the Budget discussions, and contact was established with all serving our area.

### **The JGHS Events Group**

Over the session, the Events Group has organised and supported a variety of school activities. Refreshments have been on sale at the Sports Celebration Evening, Christmas Carol Concert, Spring Fling and Diversecity. Teas and coffees have been served at all Parents' Evenings. Our annual Burns' supper and ceilidh, held in January, was a great success thanks to the involvement of many students and staff.

All of these activities do raise money and, following applications, funds will be distributed to various projects within school. Details will be published shortly and will be available at the AGM. This year will follow a similar pattern and we always welcome any parents or carers who would like to help at any of these events. (*Sheena Purdom Sept 09*)

### **Communication**

We have had further discussion with the Head Teacher, encouraging the School to collect more email addresses, and to develop a system whereby these can be added (with parental agreement) to the School Council e-distribution list. At the moment, the School does not use email to contact parents, but we are continuing discussion on this. Text message alerts have been used by School more during the past year, and have been well received by parents.

This year, the School Newsletter has only been available on the JGHS website. At our suggestion, to maximise likelihood of the newsletter being read when most relevant, the School now issues a small flyer to go in the school bags to let families know when the latest issue of the School Newsletter is on the website. Our website carries links to this and to other background documents.

We are able to use our e-list to distribute information to support the School – and were able to support the recent appeal to return Library books.

The School no longer posts out materials to incoming S1 families, so this year the School Council paid for the cost of a mailing, including circulating our own calendar of dates for the forthcoming year.

### **JGHS Trust**

The Trust was involved in a number of successful projects.

1. An Annual fund has been launched and raised an encouraging amount.
2. [Artworks@Gillespies](mailto:Artworks@Gillespies) was superbly organised, primarily by Jean Cathro, and raised significant funds for both the South Africa project and the Trust (approx £4,500). The event showcased the remarkable artistic talent within the school and it was agreed that this event should be repeated if possible, perhaps in 2011. Jean Cathro is to be invited to join the Trust.
3. Zulu-Ceilidh, organised by Francis Benton and the Bizlink group, was extremely successful and raised approx £7,500 for the South Africa Project.
4. The Small Grants Scheme met the application from the Physics department to help fund a Podcast Production Project.

The major ongoing project for the Trust is the production of a “James Gillespies Book”. There has been some process on content and contacts are being sought at Edinburgh University to add to content, before pursuing publishing options. This project may also be extended to include a Music CD.

*(Barbara McPherson 19 September 2009)*

### **Other Edinburgh issues**

Our School Council is represented at the regular **Edinburgh City Council Consultative Committee with Parents**. (CCWP)

We have also been participating in the **Edinburgh Parent Council Network** (EPCN), which brings together (electronically) most of the Parent Councils in Edinburgh. There are occasional meetings too. The e-group allowed School Councils to share information about possible City Council Budget cuts and consequences, but also to share good practice in parental involvement and in how School councils are now operating.

An **evening seminar** is being planned for **29<sup>th</sup> October**, 7.00pm to 9.30pm, to consider **education policy in Edinburgh for the 21st Century!** The meeting will be held at St Thomas of Aquins School, taking a question time format with each of the political parties on Edinburgh City Council being represented, plus one 'wild card' independent view. There will be six pre-prepared questions asked over 90 minutes, each with audience follow-up. At the end of the discussion there will be 20 minutes for refreshments and chat. Final details will be on our website shortly.

There was limited parental consultation over the additional in-service day that is required by Scottish Government, to address some of the Curriculum for Excellence issues. The conclusion in Edinburgh City Council is to add the extra day on to the May Victoria weekend break, as happened this year. This will apply for 2010 and 2011.

### **School Appointments**

In line with the legislation, the School Council participated in the interview panel for the current Acting Depute post. (Chair)

## Scottish Parent Council representation and co-ordination

The School Council was invited to a National Parents Conference on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June, which amongst other things discussed the establishment of a National Parents Forum. Tom MacIntyre represented the School Council and attended three workshops as well as engaging in discussions on future actions and the way ahead. The three workshops attended were: Learning Together for Success (Port Glasgow HS Head Teacher and Parent Council sharing how they have been working with the wider parent forum to help parents support young people's learning); 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers (A *Franklin Covey Foundation* presentation on how parents can help their teenager develop their potential); Parents helping to improve learning and teaching (How parent council members of Stromness Academy have been helping the school take forward Curriculum for Excellence). Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, has subsequently agreed to setting up the new National Forum so that it will be genuinely parent-led and accountable to parents. Government officials have been discussing with local authority contacts what needs to be done to set up a first meeting of the forum in November. A conference report is available on the ParentZone site ([http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/Images/Conferencereport\\_tcm4-559881.pdf](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/Images/Conferencereport_tcm4-559881.pdf)) and details about the future meetings and outcomes of these meetings will be posted on our website.

## Planning Ahead

### *School Building Design and Replacement*

During the coming year a major pre-occupation will be the design of the new James Gillespie's High School campus. The School staff are very excited about this. The City of Edinburgh will be spending £1.5M developing the design, using a formal design process involving consultation with staff, pupils, parents and community. The process has already begun and parents will be formally involved in 2010. Parents have expressed interest in a variety of aspects, including environmental issues, energy use, pupil involvement, maintaining the campus feel, architectural design, and planning. We expect to form several focus groups on these issues, starting with workshops after the AGM on 6<sup>th</sup> October. To be informed of developments in a timely fashion, parents should send/text their email address and mobile phone number to [council@jghs.org.uk](mailto:council@jghs.org.uk) / 0787 967 1811.

### *Regular School Council meetings and activities – get involved!*

The School Council has already had a number of discussions with the Management Team in School, to improve co-ordination in the coming year. Dates have been identified for School Council discussion evenings, and for the Events Group to meet. These all appear in the School Calendar.

### *Burns Supper – date for your diary*

The annual JGHS Burns Supper and Ceilidh night is agreed for **Friday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2010**.

### *South African Project and Global Citizenship*

Following on from a suggestion at an earlier School Council meeting, we helped to arrange a very successful evening event on 30<sup>th</sup> April. Staff and students shared some of their experiences from the February JGHS trip to South Africa, and it was a chance for parents and students to meet more informally to learn more too. This will now become an annual event. Next year it takes place on **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2010**.

JGHS Council Officers September 2009